



# Rosacea

## Health Education Facts

### What is rosacea?

Rosacea is a disease affecting the skin of the face -- mostly where people flush. Rosacea usually starts with redness on the cheeks and can slowly worsen to include one or more additional symptoms and parts of the face, including the eyes.

Because changes are gradual, it may be hard to recognize rosacea in its early stages. Unfortunately, many people mistake rosacea for a sunburn, a complexion change, or acne and do not see a doctor.

Rosacea can't be cured, but it can be controlled.

### What are the symptoms?

Most rosacea patients have only one or two symptoms; here is a complete list of the most common ones:

**Redness --** This looks like a blush or sunburn and is caused by flushing (when a larger amount of blood flows through vessels quickly and the vessels expand under the skin to handle the flow). The redness gradually becomes more noticeable and will not go away. Facial skin may get very dry.

**Pimples --** Later, pimples may appear on the face. These pimples may be inflamed -- small, red and solid or pus-filled, like teenage acne. Because they look alike, rosacea has been called "adult acne" or "acne rosacea." But, people with rosacea do not normally have the blackhead or whitehead type of pimples that are usually seen in teenage acne.

**Red lines --** When people with rosacea flush, the small blood vessels of the face get larger, eventually showing through the skin. These enlarged blood vessels look like thin red lines on the face, usually on the cheeks. These lines may be hidden at first by flushing, blushing, or redness, but they usually reappear when the redness is cleared up.

**Nasal bumps --** When rosacea is not treated, some people -- especially men -- may eventually get small knobby bumps on the nose. As more bumps appear, the nose looks swollen.

### Who gets rosacea?

Rosacea is usually seen in adults. It seems to affect fair-skinned people more often, though it can affect any skin type. Most people who get rosacea have a history of flushing or blushing more easily and more often than the average person.

Women get rosacea a little more often than men, but men are more likely to develop nasal bumps.

The image of one famous sufferer, W.C. Fields, helped to mistakenly link rosacea with alcoholism. Although drinking alcohol can make rosacea worse, even people who never drink alcohol can develop rosacea.

### How does rosacea progress?

In most people, the first sign of rosacea is rosy cheeks; the face gets red in patches and stays red; eventually redness doesn't go away at all.

Rosacea is a chronic condition. In most people, symptoms come and go in cycles. These flare-ups are common. Although the condition may improve (go into remission) for a while without treatment, it is often followed by a worsening of symptoms (redness, pimples, red lines or nasal bumps) that progresses over time.

### What causes rosacea?

There are many theories but none have been proven. Researchers now believe that there is a link between rosacea and how often and how strongly people flush or blush.

### What should I do about rosacea?

See your dermatologist. It is easy to mistake skin disorders and doctors know best how to identify and treat rosacea. Non-prescription acne medications may irritate dry, sensitive skin. These products have ingredients that are not appropriate for treating rosacea.

### Can rosacea be treated?

Definitely yes. Treatment can lessen or get rid of symptoms. Most dermatologists think that early treatment can keep rosacea from getting worse -- even prevent blood vessels from enlarging or nasal bumps from developing.